

Mr. Dan Ruben
Executive Director, Equal Justice America
Building II - Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Thank you and your organization for supporting my public interest summer internship through an Equal Justice America fellowship. The work I did would not have been financially possible for me without your support.

I served as a legal intern at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. My main assignment was in the Fair Housing and Community Development project. I worked with my boss to help conduct research for a Community Benefits Agreement between west Baltimore and a major company building a facility in the area. The CBA is set to bring in millions of dollars of investment with direct benefits for residents. I also worked on an Assessment of Fair Housing for Madison County, Illinois to see where they could continue to improve policies to provide fair housing access for all individuals. Our recommendations in the report are based on an analysis of the needs of the community.

I also worked on fair housing litigation. I also helped research an amicus brief for a predatory lending case and the Department of Housing and Urban Development's new policies on preventing housing discrimination against people with criminal backgrounds. Most of my work was on a case in New York for zoning discrimination. I conducted research on precedent with similar fact patterns. I also analyzed expert depositions to figure out if particular experts would be useful in our case. For a zoning discrimination case in California involving housing for unaccompanied minors, I summarized depositions of the city council members and city staff involved in blocking the project. I specifically noted statements that could be used to show discriminatory intent or impact. By continuing to try these cases, Lawyers' Committee will make a difference for the individuals affected by these discriminatory zoning policies for years to come.

Finally, I helped the Voting Rights Project with some of their litigation efforts. I researched precedent on courts' definitions of minority-preferred candidates to support a Section 2 vote dilution case in North Carolina. I also researched the locations of voter ID offices in Tennessee to examine the distribution across the state in comparison to the racial distribution. Finally, I helped provide information on a suit against my home county—Gwinnett County, Georgia—for a three-part vote dilution claim. I also helped connect them with advocates and sympathetic parties in the county to secure the necessary plaintiffs for the action.

All of the work was incredibly meaningful to me, and it was clear to see the difference I was making in the lives of individuals through my work. I remain humbled by the experience.

Sincerely,
Melinda Johnson
Harvard Law School Class of 2018